Case study

NatCen Social Research

Sector Education
Service Bespoke Software

May 2021

Partnering Pragmatically

Taking a pragmatic approach to partnership ensures our work helps bring continuing success for Britain's leading social research organisation.

Working in partnership to develop and design bespoke internal systems / Providing quick, accurate and efficient collection and analysis of data / Providing ongoing support and training requirements as needed.

NatCen Social Research is the largest independent social research organisation in the UK with an international reputation for delivering robust and rigorous research which has an impact on all areas of social policy. NatCen has a team of 250 staff and a field force of over 1000 freelance interviewers. They are a not-for-profit organisation whose clients include various government agencies and educational institutions.

The ability to collect and analyse results quickly, accurately, and efficiently is of paramount importance in the research field and it's what NatCen's built their reputation on. Information and technology play a crucial role in achieving these outcomes and we have helped NatCen continuously improve what they do which in turn aids them in keeping their market leading position.

As a progressive organisation, NatCen recognised the need to partner with an experienced technology company who could work collaboratively with them. By engaging to design and develop new digital platforms, advise on the use of technology within their business and provide specialised training and support, they could continue to lead in their field. Most importantly, they were looking to engage with a partner who understood and shared their values and philosophy.

In a competitive proposal process, our customer intimate approach to managing relationships resonated with NatCen, along with our willingness to share knowledge and expertise, commitment to putting people first and ability to tailor our services to meet NatCen's specific needs. By proving a strong track record on quality, delivery, and expertise in similar partnerships with other organisations we provided reassurance to all stakeholders that we were set to deliver.

The highly collaborative partnership has been wide ranging in its impact. In initial engagements we provided knowledge sharing and learning support consultancy to NatCen staff in-house technical teams. Building on this we have since gone on to develop many digital platforms collaboratively with NatCen teams which provide unique and market leading capabilities. Through these joint deliveries we have also helped NatCen on their journey on building out their agile software delivery and engineering practices. Our work together has had strong engagement from across the organization and being able to respond quickly to change.

Our partnership continues to change as NatCen evolves further as an organisation and we are excited to be on the journey with them as their research plays a powerful role in shaping policy across the UK.

“We were not looking for an outsource partner in the usual sense, rather someone who could work closely with our in-house team and provide knowledge sharing and support. When we embarked on the partner selection exercise, we were unsure whether we would find an organisation which not only shared our values but also would be willing to proactively share their knowledge and expertise with our internal team of developers. However, Waterstons came through strong on all these points.”

Simon Holroyd
Head of Project Management